



ISSUE BRIEF

Child Care for Children with Exceptional Needs

CHILD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

915 Capitol Mall Room 336 • Sacramento, California 95814 • (916) 653-3725 • FAX (916) 446-9643

The Needs

By 1995, it is estimated over half a million individuals in California will meet the federal definition of developmentally disabled and will need services, including that of child care. Parents and families of children with exceptional needs have found limited access and availability to child care services. Parents, in a study conducted in 1989 were found to use 30 to 35+ hours of child care a week in a variety of forms child care (*see graph on back page*). The study found that Day Care was the least used form of child care. This is not a result of disinterest in day care, but in the lack of availability. Parents who do use child care, use a variety of child care options, from respite care to public school care. Exceptional needs children in child care (integrated) show higher levels in language, cognitive, and motor skills. Not only do just the children benefit from the child care, but also their parents through social support of teachers and other parents. Unfortunately, because of limited availability to child care, exceptional needs children and their parents are not receiving the quality of education that should be available to them.

"There is a strong need for child care for disabled children while parents work. It is extremely difficult to find child care for them."

Federal and State Efforts

Both federal and state legislature have adopted policy to incorporate the rights of children with developmental disabilities. One model program which was enacted by the government to combat children at risk is Head Start.

Head Start serves preschool-aged children from low income families. It address their educational, social, emotional, nutritional, and health care needs. In 1972 Congress required Head Start to allow 10 percent of its enrollment to children with disabilities. Presently, Head Start is exceeding the minimum requirement by enrolling over 83,000 (13.4 percent) children with disabilities.

The Federal Block Grant (FBG) allocates 10 percent of all their funds to children with special needs.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which was signed into law in 1990, requires that individuals with disabilities have access to public accommodations. This requires day care providers to change their practices in a case-by-case manner to accommodate for children with disabilities.

Within the State of California there are numerous programs serving the needs of developmentally disabled children. Current State laws have been enacted to promote their welfare and accessibility to child care. **The Early Intervention Services Act (1993)** defines a system to provide early intervention programs to children who have developmental delays.

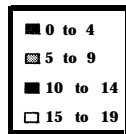
Limitations

By enacting laws focusing on equal rights, services, and education for those with disabilities, the federal and state governments have begun to recognize children with exceptional needs; however, these services are limited. Support needs to continue to ensure that children with exceptional needs and their parents are not left unheard. Integration helps to combat the needs of exceptional needs children by providing a stimulating atmosphere in which they can improve their social, motor, and cognitive abilities. With integration, children without disabilities learn to accept diversity by learning to value other's differences.

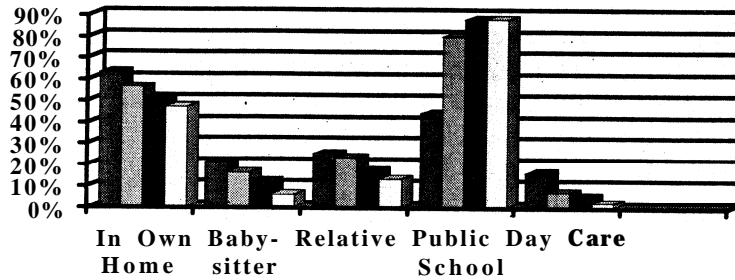
Through programs such as Head Start, the needs of exceptional needs children and their families are being addressed. Exceptional needs children and their families desire the support of such programs to provide proper education and support. Through such programs, exceptional needs children can become capable of living productive lives.

Definition Of Exceptional Needs

Disabilities or exceptional needs may take a variety of forms including physical challenges such as orthopedic handicaps or sensory impairments, developmental limitations; mental retardation, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, autism, or other related neurological conditions. Advocates of children with special needs have asked for the consolation of one definition.



Percent Using Child Care
(measured by hours)



In home care: parental care; Babysitter: Family Day Care; Relative: grandparents, siblings; Public school: mainstreaming; Day Care: center or programs.

Public Law 95-102 defines a developmental disability as a severe chronic disability which is attributable to a mental or physical impairment or combination of mental and physical impairment or combination of mental and physical impairments. It is manifested before the person attains age twenty-two and is likely to continue indefinitely thereby, resulting in substantial functional limitations in three or more of the following areas of major life activities:

- self care
- receptive and expressive language
- learning
- mobility
- capacity or independent living
- economic self-sufficiency

The persons needs reflect that of a combination and sequence of special, interdisciplinary or generic care, treatment, or other services that are of lifelong extended duration and are individually planned.

Head Start

Head Start was enacted in 1965 as a means to combat the "War on poverty." Head Start targets primarily low income children below the age of 6. The program goal assist in educational, health, and social development of children. Head Start encourages parent involvement through parent organizations and development programs. Children may attend Head Start in year round or summer programs.

The Laterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act (Welfare and Institution Code 4512(a)) describes developmental disability as a substantial disability which originates before an individual reaches the age of 18 and continues or can be expected to continue indefinitely. This term includes mental retardation, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, and autism, but not other disabilities solely physical in nature.

Resources:

- Diamond, K. E., L. L. Hestenes, and C. E. O'Connor.
"Integrating Young Children With Disabilities In Preschool: Problems and Promise." *Young Children*, January 1994, p.p. 68-75
- Jones, J.Y. *Head Start - A History Of Legislation, Issues and Funding*. Library of Congress. March, 1978.
- Mercer, J.; D.J. Chavez. 1989. *Families Coping With Disability: Study of California Families With Developmentally Disabled Children*. University of California, Riverside.
- On The Capitol Doorstep*. February and October 1993, v.23, n.2, 8.
- Sonier, C. 1991. *Implementing Early Intervention Services for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities (P.L. 101 -476, Part H)*. National Conference of State Legislatures.

For additional information, please contact:

California Department of Developmental Services
Prevention and Children's Services Branch (800) 515-BABY.
Local Head Start Program.

Prepared by Shelly Wong, Junior Analyst and Doreen Kushida.